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ABSTRACT

Noting that the cultural and racial make-up of the American family population has changed, this paper characterizes the early childhood community's responses to diversity among families on the basis of position statements, program policies, and innovative local initiatives. The paper argues that to assure equitable treatment of culturally diverse families, early childhood professionals need to move from equalizing access to-including cultural diversity within the infrastructure of early childhood programs. Three approaches are suggested to maintain and respect cultural integrity in the delivery of services. The first approach aims at undoing intolerance by focusing on changing the negative responses to cultural diversity. This approach strives to teach explicitly that differences are good and bias against difference is bad. The second approach uses family culture as a bridge in acquiring "mainstream" skills. This approach seeks creative solutions to dilemmas that culturally different parents face who want their children to have early experiences that will prepare them for success in school without having to give up cultural traditions. The third approach fosters development in the home culture and, if parents desire, embraces the bicultural option. Publications, resources, and program models are described that enable and illustrate these teaching approaches. In addition to program curricula that define a culturally sensitive commitment, the paper suggests structural mechanisms to foster improved thinking and practice regarding family diversity: a continuing dialogue between programs and the populations they serve to shape policies and practices, staff programs with personnel who are culturally competent, and partnerships with community-based organizations. (BAC)

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Early Childhood Reform: Innovative Approaches to Cultural and Racial Diversity Among Families

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Introduction

The United States takes pride in its view of the family as the backbone of society. The stronger families are — both in insuring their members' physical, economic, psychological and emotional well-being — the better off the future of this country. Yet family strength does not stem exclusively from what takes place *within* the family. It stems as well from the context within which families operate and the support systems that surround them. One such system is early childhood services.

"Early childhood services" encompass a vast array. In general these are services whose purpose is to contribute to the health and well being of children from birth to age 8. They include *direct services to children* — primary school programs from kindergarten through 3rd grade, as well as programs for younger children such as family day care homes, Head Start, nursery schools, infant programs, and day care centers. Direct services to children also include before- and after-school care and recreation programs, medical and nutritional health services, counseling, therapy and other special services for children with disabilities. In addition, early childhood services may be *directed to the parents* of children. These include prenatal and parent education programs, career counseling and employment training, housing, general education, legal and other social services.

In the last decade, one segment of this system — early care and education programs serving children from birth through age 4 — has taken on new importance in the lives of families due to two recent conditions. First, profound changes in American family life have impacted children's lives — the dramatic increase in the number of mothers working outside the home, and the number of households headed by single women. Second, evidence is

accumulating about the benefits of early education and care for young children, resulting in widespread public response and increasing demand for early childhood services (Ford Foundation, 1989.) These trends have yielded more children to out of home care at very young ages, fueling public concern about the availability of services and the appropriateness of practices.

Parallel to these developments been another change. Demographic shifts over the past 30 years are changing the cultural and racial makeup of the American family population (National Commission of Children, 1991):

> . . . minorities, including blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, Eskimos, and Aleuts — make up a greater share of the population today than they did in past decades. The growth in Hispanic and Asian populations . . . has been especially rapid, partially because of immigration and partially because of higher fertility rates among these groups. Demographers project that the proportion of minority children will continue to increase over the next 20 years . . . and by the turn of the century, that one third of America's young people will come from minority groups (pp 15-16).

Thus, as a nation we are moving away from forms of early care that are within the home, among family members, or within the neighborhood, and at the same time growing in cultural and racial diversity.

This paper characterizes present responses of the early childhood community to diversity among families on the basis of position statements, program policies, and innovative local initiatives. It argues that three dominant approaches are evident: seeking to undo the effects of intolerance, using family culture as a bridge in acquiring "mainstream" skills, and supporting bicultural development. The paper also outlines strategies for refining and improving early childhood programs as they seek to serve today's families and children.

Moving From Equalizing Access to Examining Program Practices

Our national creed promises equitable treatment to all families regardless of race or cultural background. Although differing views exist about the character of what we ought to become — a melting pot or tossed salad — there is constant struggle and movement towards "the inclusion of minorities." In order to make America *in practice* the land of opportunity, racially and culturally different families must have *access* to opportunity:

> Our national interest in equality of educational opportunity has a long history that predates America's recent commitment to young children. Constitutional provisions, court decisions, legislative actions, and administrative mandate have all affirmed national commitments to equal access and equal justice in our society and in our schools. Concerned about assimilating "new immigrants," and according opportunities to minorities, generations of scholars and practitioners have looked to the schools as societal equalizers (Kagan, 1990, p.11).

As this paradigm is applied to families with very young children, it drives the effort to increase *availability* by creating new services. "Minorities" are targeted wherever they are regarded as unserved or underserved, and because this most often occurs among low income families, the service mission is "early intervention." Designed to countervail against the negative effects of poverty, new services gain families access to experiences that help their children catch up or get ahead.

As a response to cultural diversity, addressing equity through availability is an important policy principle. Racially and culturally diverse families are indeed overrepresented among the poor and thus benefit from efforts to increase access to family support and early intervention services. The National Black Child Development Institute for example, in its recent status report on African American children cites the provision of these types of programs as an important public policy response to the dire and growing crises

faced by low income African American children (Moore, 1991.) The report calls for sp supports to families in their child-rearing functions, through massive increases in fe support for safe, affordable child care through the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Increases in other public funds are called for also:

(1) Head Start, which serves only 27% of the eligible children;

(2) WIC (Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children), which serves only 35% of its eligible population;

(3) Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which serves only 50% of the eligible children (p. 7-8).

Yet, access is not enough to assure equitable treatment to culturally diverse families. Particularly as we concern ourselves with younger and younger children, we know that *the culture* which plays such a profound role in family life and in children's early development must also be addressed in the ways we provide appropriate, quality, early childhood services:

> Because of the age of the children, the issues on which families and professionals focus in providing services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are closely related to the family's values, beliefs, and traditions. The most basic issues -- health care, sleeping, eating, regulating body states, building relationships, and exploring the environment -- are central concerns for those who work with young children. These issues are also the ones that families control, and in which there is typically no "outside" interference . . .When . . . outsiders become involved with the child and family . . . the potential for conflict related to childrearing practices emerges (Lynch and Hanson, 1992, p.6).

Thus, as diversity grows, the challenge to early childhood services grows to address the dimension of equity these important cultural traits raise. On the surface, their impact may appear to be manifest strictly as classroom practice issues. Yet, as early care and education settings are working to deepen their sensitivity to culture, it is increasingly acknowledged

that cultural values and their resultant interactional styles also manifest themselves *within* the infrastructure of programs. And unless we gain a better understanding of these, the service delivery techniques could endanger and offset other advantages that access to the service may provide. Three examples follow to illustrate this argument.

The first illustrates how cultural world view is implicit in organizational structures of institutions and influences the operational rules of programs. Dixon (1976) describes a mental health clinic in an African-American community that faced an 80 percent no-show rate for pre-arranged, psychological counseling appointments, thereby losing state reimbursements. Clients preferred to appear on other days as "walk-ins" whenever they felt they needed help, which only coincidentally coincided to their prearranged appointments. To them, it made no sense to "bottle up" feelings until some pre-set future date arrived; or at that date there was no "felt need." A simple switch to a procedure of phoning for an appointment on the day a felt-need arose resulted thereafter in a 90% show rate. (Dixon's analysis characterizes this scenario in terms of culturally distinct differences between future-time orientation and present-time orientation.)

The second example, illustrating how cultural perspective influences programs' agenda priorities, comes from Lilly Wong Fillmore's (1991) commentary, "Early childhood education: English first or families first?" The controversy it describes is whether the provision of English emersion programs for preschool-aged non-English speaking children transforms them into English speakers and overcomes their language barrier to equal educational opportunities, or leads to children losing their primary language and with it the ability to communicate with their parents, thus *increasing the educational, social, and psychological risks*

these children and families already face. (The problem seems not so much to be the developmental ability of young children to learn a second language, but the disruption to their developing sense of self, "especially when the second language is promoted in a way that suggests that it is more socially desirable and valued than their primary language.") Wong agrees that language minority children should learn English and that childhood services should find effective ways to help them do so. But she describes English immersion as the "worst possible solution to a complex problem" (p.2).

The third example illustrates the subtle manifestations of culture mismatch in program practices. Metz (1991) reports dramatic differences in the behaviors of both children and adults when people who speak the child's language or are from the same neighborhood are used in the screening, assessment and program development process. She finds significant differences in how quickly the family develops trust and responds, how much information they volunteer, and how well they establish a relationship with the agency. She argues:

> A large piece of culture is intuitive, and someone from that child's background may do things in a way that is much more natural and free flowing. I assessed a child from a Puerto Rican background whom I spent time with and tried to hold on my lap, but my Spanish does not have a Puerto Rican intonation and I had little response. The mediator was Puerto Rican, and the child went over immediately and sat in her lap. I don't know what that child was responding to, but something felt more comfortable and familiar (p. 9.)

Thus, if early childhood leaders only work on funding/program availability and ignore issues of strategy/program quality around cultural diversity, early childhood services may wind up being unpopular with parents, not reaching their intended outcomes of healthy child development, self-esteem, motivation and readiness. How, then, in early care and education

settings, do we recognize and respond to the need for infrastructure supports that maintain diverse cultural views and values that the children and families bring?

A Commitment to Respecting Cultural Integrity in Program Practices

In order to generate strategies that assure equitable treatment to culturally diverse families both in terms of access and program quality, our approaches to diversity must start from a position that reexamines our knowledge base about culture and its role in development. We must redirect out thinking to view culture as a context within which *all* development occurs, as a rule-governed system with integrity[1], and as an influence on development as important as that of biology and individual history in the life of the child.

For current human development policy and practice to embrace this perspective requires breaking away from past notions of "cultural disadvantage," and suspending the pervasive ethnocentrism influencing our thinking. Both are tied to the long standing child development tradition where much of what we know is the product of predominately North American/European scientific endeavors, which have resulted in a narrow database. Although there is growing awareness that empirical findings reported in the literature cannot be generalized to most of the world's children today, still we find descriptions of children that nonetheless make assumptions about "normal development" from a Eurocentric perspective. These assumptions then lead to prescriptions for generic program practices, such

[1] being sound, unimpaired, and in perfect condition as opposed to being a source of deficiency

as the recent effort to promote "developmentally appropriate practice" as a framework for teaching in early childhood programs (Phillips and Cooper, 1992.)

In recent years, we have begun to seriously challenge our own thinking and there is evidence that our changing ideas are penetrating policy formulation and practice in programs for young children. Early childhood professionals are developing new approaches to work with families to transform the ways in which programs operate to deliver services. Let us look at this progress and the challenges we still face.

Three Approaches to Maintaining Cultural Integrity

If the profession's commitment to improve our response to cultural/racial diversity can be measured by positions reflected in major documents disseminated by national associations, then the following statement sums up what we find:

> Cultural diversity is one of America's greatest riches; it must be respected and preserved, while at the same time ensuring that all children have an equal opportunity to enter the social and economic mainstream.
>
> Children need a cultural identity, a sense of who they are, and a sense of pride on their heritage. When society, through its major institutions, fails to recognize and respect parent's and children's cultural differences, it denigrates them and makes them feel that they have no legitimate place in society.
>
> Differences in skin color, language, and religious beliefs have long been an excuse for exclusion and discrimination. This country must discard once and for all the stereotypes and intolerance of the past. It must strive to create an environment in which all children and families are accepted and encouraged to participate in mainstream life. Policies and programs, as well as the spirit of communities, must be sensitive to and supportive of persons of different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. They should strengthen all parents' ability to raise children to become responsible and productive adults. And they should ensure that the doors of opportunity are open to all children (National Commission on Children, 1991, p. 69).

Throughout the early childhood profession the articulation of this principle of cultural sensitivity and support is uniformly widespread. These traits are endorsed in position statements from major national early childhood associations, such as the 1988 Multicultural Education: A position statement, from the Southern Early Childhood Association — formerly the Southern Association on Children Under Six (SACUS). They are identified as "indicators of program quality" in the National Academy of Early Childhood Education's Accreditation Criteria (NAEYC). And cultural diversity and sensitivity to it are described as "characteristic of an ideal early childhood system" in Sugarman's influential Building Early Childhood Systems (1991).

The general commitment to this principle however, propagates a variety of approaches. (One excellent analysis of the varieties in education practice can be found in Sleeter and Grant's 1987 article.) As noted earlier, some policy and practices concentrate on availability. Others, of particular interest here, concentrate on concern for protecting cultural integrity as central to sound development. The features of both however, are so closely intertwined that their underlying differences are sometimes hard to distinguish. For example, let's say we want to insure sound nutrition practices for pregnant women in a community where the population is changing from European-American to Latino. Typically, *nutrition information has been distributed by obstetricians primarily from their private practice offices.* One new approach focuses on **distributing** nutrition information through health fairs, public clinics, in shopping malls, etc., places where Latino families are more likely to be found. Another may stress **translating** nutrition information into the primary language of the recipients. Still others may concern themselves with **revising the content** of the

information using references to dietary preferences and habits indigenous to Latinos, along with **distribution by personnel** viewed by Latinos as knowledgeable and trustworthy in matters of health.

This example illustrates the point that even while various approaches *ostensibly* may increase access, the level at which they support preserving cultural integrity varies. Thus as our understanding of these different approaches improves, we can deepen our abilities to plan and deliver services that truly are equitable in a culturally diverse society. Let us therefore, examine some of these variations in preserving the integrity of culture. Three types of approaches are characterized:

1. Those that emphasize undoing intolerance by attacking the forces that undermine cultural integrity;
2. Those that emphasize using the child's culture as a bridge to acquire mainstream cultural skills;
3. Those that emphasize fostering development in the home culture alongside acquisition of second culture.

Type One: Undoing Intolerance

This approach aims to neutralize the negative value system surrounding cultural differences. It starts from the assumption that a major barrier to development is established when children and families *as members of a particular cultural group* are responded to as incompetent. The approach therefore focuses on changing the negative responses to cultural diversity. It goes beyond merely exposing people to factual, historically accurate information

about different cultures and/or celebrating diversity. It strives to explicitly teach that differences are good and bias against difference is bad.

Undoing intolerance is evident in the view of the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA). Their multicultural position statement (1988) argues that as people in the U.S. from diverse cultural backgrounds become more interested in maintaining their cultural identity, there is need for a stronger focus that identifies specific strategies that will result in less discrimination and more understanding and acceptance of all people in the society.

Resources with this emphasis for early care and education programs are increasing in availability, such as the National Association for Family Day Care publication, Helping Children Love Themselves and Others: A Professional Handbook for Family Day Care Providers (1990). Further, two organizations, both located in New York City, specialize in books, filmstrips and videotape resources in support of this approach — the Council on Interracial Books for Children and Educational Equity Concepts.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has also made a major contribution with their publication The Anti-bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children (1989). The mission is to *change what children are learning* so that every child is enabled "to construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity; to develop comfortable, empathetic, and just interactions with diversity; and to develop critical thinking and the skills for standing up for oneself and others in the face of injustice" (p ix.) The authors believe that an anti-bias curriculum embraces an educational philosophy as well as specific techniques and content. It is value based: differences are good; oppressive ideas and

behaviors are not. It sets up a creative tension between respecting differences and not accepting unfair beliefs and acts. It asks teachers and children to confront troublesome issues rather then covering them up.

One important contribution of this document is the distinction it makes between how prevailing bias in U.S. society has different effects on children of color and white children. "Empowerment for children of color requires that they develop both a strong self-identity and a proud and knowledgeable group identity to withstand the attacks of racism. In contrast, white children's task is to develop positive identity without white ethnocentrism and superiority."(pp ix-x.) This distinction represents a clear and straightforward conceptual view of the different developmental consequences of bias depending upon the cultural/racial group membership, laying the groundwork for policies and practices that may need to be *group specific*. Whereas we typically think that mixing people together and treating everyone the same is the antidote for segregation as a practice that maintains inequity, this idea suggests an alternative view. When culturally homogeneous grouping facilitates discussions and task accomplishments, separating people may be needed to help *eliminate* barriers to equity.

In addition to using antibias curricula, there are other ways programs model this approach. Policy and practices governing staff composition can evidence efforts to eliminate the barriers to recruiting and retaining culturally and racially diverse staff. Commonplace personnel practices, thought to be culturally neutral, may need to be examined and suspended. Holding positions open until a satisfactorily diverse applicant pool is found, or advertisement in places with a higher likelihood of locating diverse candidates are strategies

that actively attack mechanisms that preserve the status quo.

Continuous work on the part of program staff to identify and eliminate bias in the ongoing program operation further models undoing intolerance. A critical element in this work is for program staff to shift their thinking about the criteria they use to evaluate their work -- moving toward a willingness to be judged on its consequences not just its intent. Programs who model this commitment also use outside expertise about culture and race bias, making these topics a continuing part of the staff development agenda.

Eliminating the forces that undermine cultural integrity also means examining barriers to parent involvement. This might involve reconceptualizing definitions of involvement that go beyond parents' role as "classroom volunteers." Modeling these new definitions requires building infrastructure supports to sustain them, like extending the hours of staff and facility availability.

Enrollment and/or grouping policies can model undoing intolerance by eliminating the subtle ways the culturally different are treated as exotic--where efforts to "integrate" groups place the needs of the majority ahead of the needs of the culturally different. For instance, policy may spread diverse children out in isolated groups without thought or discussion given to the sacrificed psychological support they and their parents may experience. Grouping practices/policies should respond to these changing dynamics and preferences with flexibility, sensitivity and integrity.

Type two: Culture as a Bridge.

This approach uses the culture that children and families bring to transition them to mainstream lifestyles. It starts from the assumption that successful adaptation to mainstream society can be accomplished by using elements of the home culture to set the stage for activities that will foster the achievement of specific mainstream goals. Maintaining culture is promoted, but mainly in the interest of establishing a floor to support the development of other skills. The tools of the culture thus are used to create a familiar, comfortable and inviting institutional environment.

This approach characterizes much of the policy work that major organizations have recently conducted to address diversity issues. The NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education (1988), makes recommendations for state boards of education that include "responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity." It advocates encouraging the continuation of the culture and language of the home, while providing skills and conceptual development that will allow children to succeed in the larger society. They recommend using home language to teach basic skills while the child acquires English with the goal being to ensure academic success and proficiency in English without losing proficiently in the home language (p.17.)

Similar emphasis can be found in the Zero to Three: National Center for Clinical Infant Programs publication Serving Culturally Diverse Families of Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities. Designed to assist policy makers and practitioners to "develop programs that serve families within the families' own cultural frameworks and lifestyles," this document identifies specific cultural paradigms, and advocates that programs recognize families as a

source of relevant, unique perspectives and insights regarding their own children. Professionals are admonished to demonstrate they are willing, indeed anxious to learn from the family and community as much as he or she is willing to give professional expertise:

> Family members must not be put into a position of choosing between traditional healing practices and mainstream programs which they may or may not understand, agree with, or value. Rather efforts should be made to integrate mainstream and traditional approachers when a family so desires (p.12).

The document contains an extensive discussion of strategies for states to increase their cultural sensitivity with strong emphasis on inclusion of parent's views in policy and program decision making.

When programs model this approach to diversity there is often an analogue to culture as a bridge in their mission — to mediate between the culture of the home community and that of the larger community. Head Start is a highly visible example of this. The program's approach to issues of cultural relevance and diversity mirrors its mission to "help children achieve social competence and reach their full potential." The "Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs" (1991) reflect the culmination of a 3 year project growing out of a much longer history of attempts to address the needs of "minority children and families" that began as an effort to develop a bilingual strategy for Spanish speaking children in the 1970's. The document serves as guidance for all grantees to encourage individualizing services so that every child and family feels respected and valued and is able to grow in accepting and appreciating differences. The ten (10) principles are comprehensive and go beyond what takes place in the classroom to all component services and the administration of the program:

1. Every child is rooted in culture.
2. The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are primary sources for culturally relevant programming.
3. Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the culture of different groups and discarding stereotypes.
4. Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.
5. Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.
6. Effective programs for children with limited English speaking ability require continued development of the primary language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.
7. Culturally relevant programming requires staff who reflect the community and families served.
8. Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences. It is beneficial to all children.
9. Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.
10. Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all components and services.

The Administration for Children, Youth, and Families has funded six grantees to demonstrate delivery of Head Start services infused with these principles. These projects will issue reports in the fall of 1993. Depending upon which of the principles is emphasized, program strategies may evolve that place less emphasizes on culture as a bridge and more emphasis on development of children and families within their home culture, the third approach to be discussed later.

Programs that model using culture as a bridge give high priority to insuring the presence of staff who represent both cultural worlds. They must posses identities and skills to make the community participants feel comfortable *and* to help them acquire proficiency in the skills of the larger community. Policies governing staff composition would make explicit statements that identify a culturally diverse staff composition as an *operational*

necessity for quality service delivery, not just a fair employment gesture.

Since this approach struggles philosophically to find the best strategies to communicate its respect for culture and belief in its integrity, settings are important. The physical presence of cultural artifacts, food customs, photographs of historical and contemporary heroes have high visibility. Customs and traditions that enhance group identity are evident and supported through infrastructure mechanisms that tie programs directly into the rhythms of community institutions. Board membership derives directly from the community residents, and holiday scheduling and field trip planning reflect cultural tradition. Overall, the approach strives to accomplish the goals of the programs in ways that do not damage children's development and family's identity as they participate. It seeks creative resolutions to the dilemmas that culturally different parents face wanting their children to have early experiences that will prepare them for success in school, like learning English proficiently. At the same time, however, it attempts to avoid having to give up cultural traditions.

Type three: Bicultural development

This approach fosters development in the home culture, and where parents so desire, embraces the bicultural option. It starts from the assumption that programs should strive not merely to assimilate families using their home culture to bring them into the mainstream, but must strive to strengthen the developmental power of the child by operating the care/education environment for children in a culturally consistent manner with the home environment. Where this is the case, although the program may contain many other

elements, the emphasis on embracing the culture of the participants and on negotiating with parents to find the best ways to preserve the cultural essence of their values and lifestyles is given first priority.

Some training approaches for early childhood personnel advocate this. For example, the videotape "Essential Connections: 10 Keys to Culturally Sensitive Care" by J. Ronald Lally at Far West Laboratory, is based on the conviction that cultural connections must be maintained as children move between home and child care. Since cultural rules help children develop a secure sense of self, they must be incorporated in the care setting in order to continue building confidence, competence and connection. Strategies for transforming programs to insure these connections are described as recommendations in ten key areas: five deal with ways to structure and staff programs, and five focus on the interactional give-and-take:

1. Provide cultural consistency, where things follow the form and style of what is familiar to child at home.

2. Work toward representative staffing, where caregivers are of the same culture and speak the same language as the children served.

3. Create small groups, where caregivers can have a manageable number of cultures to relate to and come to truly know individual children and families

4. Use the home language, where children's feelings of power and connection increase.

5. Make environments relevant, where the space and materials give the message that who they are and where they come from is valued.

To insure clear communication and a path to learning more about ourselves and others —

6. Uncover your cultural beliefs, to become aware of how values and beliefs influence the way we provide care

7. Be open to the perspective of others, to arrive at new understandings or your own beliefs and how good child care can be done in more than one way.

8. Seek out cultural and family information through observation, reading, home visits, and discussions, to grow in competence as a provider of culturally specific care.

9. Clarify values, to have frequent, open communication with parents to describe concerns and questions honestly.

10. Negotiate cultural conflicts, to reach mediated, respectful decisions about practices with children.

In addition to training, approaches with this emphasis can also be found among service delivery programs. The work of the Foundation Center in California is a good example. This program and others like it are concerned with developmental consistency for children. They start with the cultural integrity of the family, then adapt practices that are considered "developmentally appropriate" by the larger field to the needs of the specific community. Racism and bias are addressed, not because teaching tolerance is important, but because overcoming these is considered a developmental task for children from disenfranchised groups as well as a central parenting concern whenever one's own children are devalued by the larger society (Richardson, 1980). At the Foundation Center, there are 11 guiding principles, among which the following two particularly exemplify its emphasis on the preservation of culture:

- Accept as incontrovertible the premise that the child, as a member of her family and as a member of her community, cannot be "educated" in isolation or in a vacuum; that the goals of the child's family and, by extension, her community, must be enhanced and enriched as a result of the child's experience in the preschool or day care setting.
- Accept as fundamental the need to define success for the child from the parents' perspective and from their value base (Lopez, 1988, p. 3.)

Because these approaches start from the assumption that the delivery of services must accommodate to the families' values, and preferred relational styles, they strive to create a climate open to the dialogue needed to generate the program transformation. A critical component therefore is to make the staff a racial and cultural reflection of the clients served and be open to and in fact, expect participants to shape the nature of the program. Rather then being wedded to a specific content, they provide a process where the interactions between the program and those served transforms the service provided. Parents are allowed to represent themselves in the program interactions and are not just passive recipients of a service.

The California-based "Parent Services Project" is a parent-to-parent support model that uses child care centers as a base of operations. Based on the premise that healthy and stable parents can best nurture healthy, secure children, PSP was developed to improve parenting skills and to strengthen parents' ability to take charge of their own lives. The program gives leadership training to parents and encourages parent control of services. The specific offerings depend upon parent decisions: respite and sick child care, CPR training,

GED or ESL classes, exercise or cooking classes, etc. (Seiderman, 1992)

Another variety of this approach to cultural preservation is one that emphasizes strengthening the power of parents as the primary socialization influence in the lives of their own children. The PACER document (Anderson and Goldberg, 1991) suggests strategies for parents as they participate in the screening and assessment process with their young children. They direct parents to *look for cultural and linguistic sensitivity in the programs that deal with your children.* "Are forms presented in your language? Is screening being done in familiar settings using objects and routines other children in the community are exposed to?" They are further advised to trust their own feelings and instincts about what does and doesn't work for their child or family, and to share cultural information such as, "my child is not walking yet because in my community children are carried until age 2," or "Children in my community do not sit in chairs to do work at a table. Could he sit on the floor instead?" This information helps make sure that the service they receive is culturally sensitive (p. 21.)

Each of the approaches just described is promising. If we are to assure the continued presence and growth of all three of these innovative approaches to cultural diversity, program approaches must be supported by an infrastructure of professional leadership, materials, model programs, training and technical assistance. In addition, continued refinements in state-of-the-art practice and broader implementation depends on support from the policy sector.

Strategies for Continued Growth

It is not enough for the field of early childhood and family services to have statements of philosophy, missions, or program curricula that define a culturally sensitive commitment or even a set of culturally relevant activities. Programs must also recognize that just as society evolves, so do programs and as these processes interact, and new contradictions will come up. As participants become more adept, sophisticated, and culturally competent, they will raise new questions. As people become better thinkers about the problems they are working to solve, they will invent better ideas about how to solve them. The old recipes won't work any more and programs must be expectant of and capable of change. Thus, we need ongoing structural mechanisms to foster improved thinking and practice regarding family diversity.

1. Structure a continuing dialogue between programs and the populations they serve to shape and reshape policies and practices.

The early childhood profession needs to create sustained mechanisms for interaction with families and representatives of various cultural communities. Reciprocal exchange of information must occur between local programs and the populations they serve, and at state, regional, and national levels where decisions are made on issues such as training and preparation of staff, development of materials, and program policies and regulations.

The dialogue, as it is structured by programs, must *reach into* the community and

must be a *process* not a single event. The dialogue can structured as a standing committee, or be the responsibility of a staff position whose specific purpose is to move the organization (and the profession) forward on the cultural diversity issues. The process group is long term and can handle issues as they come up. This is distinctly different in purpose from those shorter term groups, like those formed to write a position statement.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has established an Ethnic and Multicultural Concerns Staff Assistant to the Executive and also publishes a regular bulletin on the topic inviting dialogue from the community. The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC-TAS) has maintained a special interest group concerned with cultural diversity and its implications for services to young children. Their periodic publication focuses on resources to increase competence in working with children and families. These are national association models for different infrastructures.

The dialogue should be modeled and structured at all levels of policy making and monitoring. Parents and community representatives with various cultural perspectives should serve on state and national task forces to develop and review proposals for funding. Program performance standards should require reciprocal dialogue through standing committees and councils. Project designs should be monitored and evaluated with a specific eye towards sensitivity to changing cultural views. Families' perceptions of program effectiveness should be formally assessed annually.

At the program level, committees too should operate. But further, program personnel can build the capacity for richer dialogue if they extend themselves *into* the community, through home visits and attendance at community events. Public schools especially, often

settle for bringing the community into the school as evidence of their cultural sensitivity. Yet true reciprocity requires strategies that bring school personnel into the community, such as making home visits, participating in community activities and attending community events. Where policy creates mechanisms such as these, it establishes a platform that elevates the importance of cultural integrity to a place where it can transform program services.

2. Staff programs with personnel who are competent in the cultures of the populations served by the program, with the staff ideal being bicultural competence.

Strategies to eliminate cultural bias throughout human services are many. But most everyone agrees that skilled personnel are a key. NEC*TAS takes this position in their concern to eliminate culture bias in screening and assessment of young children. Rather than attempt to develop nonbiased instruments, they agree that professionals need to be proficient and competent in the use of guidelines and questions that help address each screening and assessment from a nonbiased stance. The goal is for the professional to possess "cultural competence" or the ability to honor and respect those beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes and behavior of families. Competence implies more than beliefs, attitudes and tolerance, though it also includes them. Competence also implies skills which help to translate beliefs, attitudes and orientation into action and behavior within the context of daily interaction with families and children (p.4).

Without doubt, evidence points to the benefits of hiring/training culturally competent program staff. Open communication is facilitated with families, and developmental goals are

achieved for children. The resistance to this idea seems to stem from questions about its logistical practicality. It is often asked for example, how can one teacher use home language with students from 6 language groups? Perhaps one person cannot, but even in extreme cases, the real limitations should be money and resources, as opposed to desire and will. In any case, alternatives such as translators and mediators are available, and as we continue to strive for the best possible culturally competent staff for all children, we will think of more.

Building cultural competence involves a two-fold effort: retraining existing staff and supplementing wherever possible, with individuals from the cultural community. Policy should support providing inservice training to teachers and administrators on cultural and linguistic responsiveness, along with providing curriculum material, resources and parent materials that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the children (NASBE, 1988, p.18.)

Policy should also ensure that public school early childhood staff includes teachers and administrators who are from the community and are racially and ethnically representative of the children served. State and federal offices should be staffed with culturally diverse people, as well as higher education institutions and training programs. Access to professional preparation in human services must be open to community members to pursue diplomas, certificates, and degrees at all levels, entry through advanced. Professional development policies within programs should be reformed such that cultural competencies result. Staff positions within service delivery programs should be created that train and elevate persons from the community into professional roles with professional salaries.

3. Create partnerships with community based organizations.

The best way to insure that the culture of communities is represented in programs is to embrace the already existing representations of culture within communities. Establish programs with community organizations as lead agencies. Mainstream schools and social service agencies may have the structural capacity to operate new programs, but at times their histories and or structural bureaueracies pose barriers that prevent programs from operating in ways sensitive to cultural differences. Local churches and community groups on the other hand, may offer the organic qualities needed to deliver services in a more culturally sensitive manner. Where child care is a need, for example, recruiting family day care providers into networks may bring more cultural integrity to the service than establishing a new center operation. Caregivers are more likely to match families, as is their potential for mediating between program goals and the cultural realities of community life.

The potential for parent empowerment and thus community empowerment is greatest where leadership and participation in community groups is grass-roots and self selected. Trustworthiness earmarks organizations that belong to the community and are endorsed by them. To the extent that they are already empowering ideas and views from within the community, they provide a culturally interpretation of equity in relation to the larger society. Further, often groups are established to mediate between the culture of the community and the mainstream. From the outside they may look like attempts to preserve cultural isolation, yet they often posses sophisticated expertise in recognizing the dilemmas and trilemmas of life in a society that demands you give up who you are culturally in order

to succeed.

In conclusion, the most innovative responses in early care and education to the cultural and racial diversity of families are those approaches that strive to protect the integrity of the family's cultural history as services are provided. This means that as we think about our professional practice, we must examine our beliefs about a universal model for good early childhood practice and make sure it neither ignores or trivializes the role of culture. Then, as we build networks to exchange ideas and strategies on these issues, the beneficiaries will be children and families and the future of this nation.

SELECTED RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

Anderson, Penny P. and Emily Shrag Fenichel (1989). *Serving Culturally Diverse Families of Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: National Center for Clinical Infant Programs.

The document grows out of a 6 year project to provide technical assistance to 15 states as they developed comprehensive and coordinated early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Several assumptions guide the emphasis, including the belief that cultural influences shape what people believe about physical, mental and emotional impairments and thus to ignore culture will doom to failure service delivery.

The document describes the beliefs and practices of 4 groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, and suggests strategies for policy and practices that states might consider in their efforts to enhance cultural sensitivity in services to infants and toddlers and their families. It also contains brief descriptions and contact information about organizations and projects in 20 states that either include culturally diverse infants and toddlers and their families or affect them.

Kiger, Gary and Deborah A. Byrnes, editors (1992) *Common Bonds: Anti-bias Teaching in a Diverse Society*. Wheaton, MD: Association for Childhood Education International.

This collection builds on the assumption that the reality of cultural diversity, rather than homogenized common culture in the U.S., should be reflected in educational policies, programs and practices. The theme is developed through explanation of the wide range of diverse factors and forces evident in student populations, including race, ethnicity, gender, physical and intellectual ability, religion and languages, and how they do and should affect educational opportunities and experiences.

Lynch, Eleanor and Marci J. Hanson (1992). *Developing Cross Cultural Competence: A Guide for Working with Young Children and their Families*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publisher.

With respect to their central concern---families of children who are disabled or at risk for disabilities--the authors suggest that services must be offered in the context of the family and view the entire family system as the partner and client, not just the child. The book is designed for the range of professionals providing educational, health care, and social services, and although focused on families of young children who are disabled or at risk for disabilities, the information is equally applicable to teachers, day care providers and volunteers who work with families from diverse cultures who do not have children with disabilities.

The authors' conceptual framework makes several important assumptions: that effective work requires learning first about one's own culture; that learning about other cultural groups is essential, but avoid using the information to stereotype; and that work with families must be culturally sensitive, and should help them negotiate mainstream culture. Contained in the book are chapters describing major cultural and ethnic groups in terms of history, values and beliefs: Anglo-European, Native American, African American, Latino, Asian, Pilipino, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island, Middle Eastern.

Sleeter, Christine E. and Carl A. Grant (November, 1987). An Analysis of Multicultural Education in the United States. *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol 57. No 4, 421-444.

The purpose of the article is to bring conceptual clarity to the field of "multicultural education" as it exists in literature published in the United States, about American schools for grades K-12. The analysis examines five approaches to multicultural education which emerge: (a) Teaching the culturally different, (b) Human relations, (c) Single group studies, (d) Multicultural education, and (e) Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist.

Shade, Barbara J. Robinson, editor (1989). *Culture, Style and the Educative Process.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

The purpose of the book is to provide an understanding of how culturally induced styles of behavior influence academic performance and to provide examples of how educators can adapt the teaching-learning process to accommodate these styles. The volume consists of a compilation of articles focused primarily on Afro-American students, and is aimed at school principals, teachers, and teacher educators. Divided into four sections, the first delineates cultural styles prevalent in various communities; the second examines the similarities and differences between the concepts of cognitive style and learning style; and the third and fourth are application oriented.

Section I entitled, "Culture: the Foundation of Style," contains six (6) articles surveying the literature describing behavioral differences between groups of people. Resulting from unique group histories, both prior to their contemporary existence in the U.S. and from life circumstances in present day society, factors such as refugee status, ethnicity, and social isolation are discussed in relation to ways in which schools respond to children. Behavioral features of several specific groups are identified — Native Americans, African-Americans, and Mexican-Americans—and the section includes case studies documenting the failure of children from various cultures to be responded to successfully by schools.

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